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Subject: California Economy Needs A Strong Education Bill From Congress
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California Economy Needs A Strong Education Bill From Congress

For California to maintain its position as the 8th largest economy in the world, our education system needs to prepare ALL students for a competitive workplace. California is making progress by implementing substantial changes to our educational standards, better testing and accountability systems, and granting local control over funding. California high school graduation rates have improved from 75 percent in 2010 to an all-time high of 81 percent in 2014. We are on the right track.

Congress now has the opportunity to join in these changes by passing the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#) (ESEA). The current version of this act, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was enacted more than 12 years ago as an effort to close achievement gaps and advance education reforms. Its goals were laudable but included an over reach by the federal government to micromanage state and local school district policies and operations.

Recently, both the U.S. Senate and House passed new versions of ESEA that will go to conference committee this summer. Both versions include many of the improvements advocated by the Chamber during our [ACCESS Washington, D.C.](#) trip in March. With strong bi-partisan support (81-17), the Senate passed S. 1177, the Every Child Achieves Act. This bill incorporates improved accountability, early childhood education, Linked Learning and clear goals that grant more flexibility to states and schools through an integrated cradle-to career system. It also intentionally connects transition points from secondary to post-secondary institutions.

The House bill HR 5 incorporates even more of the flexibility the Chamber recommended to drive improvements in student outcomes and close the achievement gap. As the Senate and House conferees meet this summer, we hope to see ESEA further improved with a more robust preschool program and further strengthening of the linkage between schools and the workplace.

California needs a federal system that complements our recent state policy improvements and provides flexibility to our schools. At a time when California and all other states need to dramatically increase the number of graduates to meet future workforce needs, it is critical for the Senate and House conference committee to advance a bi-partisan report that declares strong support from the U.S. Congress for this goal.

And that's *The Business Perspective*.



The Business Perspective is a weekly column by Gary Toebben, President & CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, produced with the input of Public Policy staff.



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